

# Chapter 5 - Program Evaluation

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*Evaluation should always be directed toward bold action that hopefully will result in the improvement of services to [gifted and talented] students through the continuation, modification, or elimination of conditions which affect learning.*

—Joseph Renzulli

Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

## Introduction

Regulation 43-220 requires that school districts submit a gifted and talented plan every three years and report on progress annually (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2 (A)(1)(a-e)). While not a formal, external program evaluation, the process requires districts to assess current program status relative to *R43-220* and to establish goals in areas identified by the State Department of Education (SDE). This planning process offers one route to evaluate student performance and the effectiveness of educational programs for gifted and talented students.

Evaluation of program effectiveness involves a two-fold process:

- 1) ensuring that the program conforms to *R43-220* and includes all components that characterize an effective program;
- 2) designing and implementing a plan for on-going program evaluation.

This chapter addresses both aspects of the evaluation process: evaluating the current status of the school district's gifted and talented program and establishing a plan for on-going program evaluation.

## Components of an Effective Gifted Education Program

To evaluate the current status of the district's gifted and talented program, school district personnel must examine the program relative to the components that characterize an effective program, making sure that the program conforms to the requirements specified in *R43-220*.

The National Association for Gifted Children in 1998 published program standards for pre-k through grade twelve to assist districts in examining the quality of their programs for gifted learners. These standards, which range from minimum to exemplary, can be an excellent resource for assessing gifted programs.

The Standards are divided into seven programming criterion areas.

### **Program Design**

The development of appropriate gifted education programming requires comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support.

### **Program Administration and Management**

Appropriate gifted education programming must include the establishment of a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing services.

### **Student Identification**

Gifted learners must be assessed to determine appropriate educational services.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Gifted education services must include curricular and instructional opportunities directed to the unique needs of the gifted child.

### **Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling**

Gifted education programming must establish a plan to recognize and nurture the unique socio-emotional development of gifted learners.

### **Professional Development**

Gifted learners are entitled to be served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education, expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, involvement in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits.

### **Program Evaluation**

Program evaluation is the systematic study of the value and impact of services provided.

Another significant resource for program planning and evaluation is *Designing Services and Programs for High Ability Learners: A Guidebook for Gifted Education* (2005) published by NAGC and Corwin Press. All districts should consult this resource when planning and evaluating local programs to understand best practices in gifted education.

This section describes briefly the components of an effective gifted and talented program. The Sample Documents at the end of the chapter include a checklist of these components that can be used to guide the evaluation of current program status. (See Sample A, page 5-10).

### **Mission Statement**

The district's vision and mission should address students who are gifted and talented. The district's gifted and talented program should have a mission statement that focuses on enhancing the intellectual and academic development of gifted and talented students. The mission statement articulates clearly and succinctly the purpose of the program.

### **◆ Program Goals and Objectives**

The gifted and talented program should have a set of clearly written goals and objectives to direct the program activities. These goals and objectives should be consistent with best practices for gifted and talented programs.

### **◆ Program Design and Service Delivery Model(s)**

The gifted and talented program should deliver services to identified students through a model or models that facilitate achievement of the program goals. The selected model(s) should be supported by research as effective in advancing the intellectual and academic development of gifted and talented students. Approved program models are described in R43-220 and in Chapter 4 of this manual.

### **◆ Written Scope and Sequence**

An effective gifted and talented program has a scope and sequence that specifies curriculum goals and objectives that will enable gifted and talented students to develop their potential to the highest possible level. The scope and sequence should be consistent with the overall goals of the gifted and talented program, the curriculum requirements stated in R43-220, and the recommendations in Chapter 2 of this manual (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(A)(1)(a) and 43-220.2(A)(2)).

### **◆ Written Curriculum**

The gifted and talented program should include written curriculum units and/or syllabi that teachers can implement with students to maximize their potential and to meet the expectations set forth in the written scope and sequence. The curriculum units/syllabi should incorporate principles of differentiation for the gifted and talented and be consistent with the recommendations in Chapter 2 of this manual.

### ◆ **Student Assessment Procedures**

An effective program has measures to document student achievement of curriculum goals and objectives. The gifted and talented program should have procedures for assessing, evaluating, and reporting student progress at the classroom level and at the district level. (See Chapter 3 of this manual.)

R 43-220 requires districts to review annually, summarize and report gifted students' performance on PACT, AP exams, IB exams, SAT, and ACT (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(D)(2)).

### **Program Evaluation Design**

Effective programs are constantly improving through on-going evaluation and implementation of any needed changes. The gifted and talented program should have a plan for on-going program evaluation.

### ◆ **Identification Procedures**

The gifted and talented program should have written identification procedures that are consistent with R43-220 and provide equity of access for qualified students (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(B)). These procedures should be articulated for school staff members and for parents and community members who may wish to refer a student for gifted and talented program placement. (See Chapter 8 of this manual.)

### ◆ **Evaluation/Placement Team**

The gifted and talented program must utilize an Evaluation/Placement Team. The evaluation step of the identification process is the responsibility of the Evaluation/Placement Team within the school or district (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(B)(8)). R 43-220 specifies that the team should be composed of a teacher, an administrator, and a psychologist (if employed by the district) at the least. It is highly recommended that the administrator be the district gifted and talented coordinator. The team may also include a guidance counselor and a community-related person whose training and expertise qualifies him or her to appraise the special competencies of students. Districts may choose either to have one team for the district as a whole or to have a team at every school. If the latter choice is selected, one team member should serve on all teams in order to ensure consistency within the district.

The evaluation and placement team is responsible for interpreting and evaluating student data in such a way that appropriate placement in the gifted and talented program is ensured (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(B)(8)(b)). The team may require additional testing of a student before determining his or her placement in the gifted and talented program. (For further information, see Chapter 8 of this manual. Also, see Review of Placement in Chapter 3.)

◆ **Written Policy on Probation, Leave, and Withdrawal**

An effective gifted and talented program articulates procedures for student withdrawals and temporary leaves from programming. Programs that place students on probation should have written procedures to guide this process. (See Review of Placement, Chapter 3, pages 3-13 through 3-17.) The evaluation and placement team is responsible for developing appropriate written procedures for probation and removing a student from the gifted and talented program (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(B)(8)(c)). The probation and removal policies of the district must conform to the state guidelines from the Office of Curriculum and Standards. Appropriate counseling with the student, as well as conferences with the student's parents/guardians and teachers, must precede his or her removal from the program. Records of any assessment and evaluative measures and other student information must be maintained in a confidential manner.

◆ **Support Services**

In addition to instructional services, gifted and talented programs must provide support services that facilitate student learning (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(A)(1)(B)). Such support services include school guidance and counseling, academic support, technology, staff development, academic competition, and parent education. (See Chapter 7 of this manual.)

◆ **Professional Development Plan**

The gifted and talented program should include professional development appropriate for total school staff, as well as for gifted and talented program personnel. Professional development related to gifted and talented education should be an integral part of the district's staff development plan. (See Chapter 6 of this manual.) Assessment of expected changes resulting from professional development activities as well as follow-up strategies should be part of an effective professional development plan.

**Procedures for Record-Keeping and Reporting**

R43-220 requires that gifted and talented programs keep accurate records of data for periodic reporting to the state. Documentation is also necessary for on-going program evaluation (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-220.2(D)). School district personnel should develop procedures for record keeping that will enable the district to meet the reporting and evaluating requirements for gifted and talented programs. (For information on reporting requirements, see Chapter 9 of this manual.)

◆ **Program Websites, Brochures and Handbooks**

Effective programs publish websites, brochures and handbooks to communicate program information to appropriate audiences. The district's gifted and talented program should provide public information websites, brochures and handbooks for parents and staff members. Publications should

include the state definition of gifted and talented, identification procedures, program goals, and a curriculum overview.

#### ◆ **Rationale for Each Program Component**

The components of an effective program work together to facilitate the achievement of program goals. The gifted and talented program should have a written rationale for each component, indicating the significance of that component within the context of the entire program. The components should come together to form a coherent whole.

## **On-Going Program Evaluation**

“The fundamental role of evaluation is to provide information that can be used to improve and advance the state of the art of gifted programs” (VanTassel-Baska, 2004, p.23). Every gifted and talented program needs a systematic plan for evaluating program effectiveness. Is the program accomplishing its goals? If not, where do adjustments need to be made? The evaluation plan should focus on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the program in meeting the needs of the students identified and served. As there is no one “right” program for gifted and talented, each gifted and talented program should be judged in terms of whether it is appropriate and effective within its own setting.

The gifted and talented program evaluation plan should provide for evaluation of all program components during a three-to-five year cycle. It should specify a reasonable timetable so that some components are assessed each year, all components are evaluated over a period of three to five years, and every component is re-evaluated on a regular basis. Provided here are steps to assist district personnel in designing an evaluation plan for a gifted and talented program.

### **Steps in Developing an Evaluation Design**

#### **1. Examine the goals of the program.**

Effective gifted and talented programs have written goals that are clearly focused on students’ academic development. School district personnel must analyze existing program goals to insure a strong academic focus. If goals have not been established for the gifted and talented program, developing them is a priority. Key individuals in the school district, as well as outside consultants, can assist with the task of identifying goals and objectives. The district’s gifted and talented program might include goals such as those listed in the table that follows.

<b>Sample Program Goals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To insure that all program components are carried out in accordance with law, regulations, and best practices in gifted and talented education.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a program design that facilitates the effective delivery of services to meet the needs of gifted and talented learners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance the curriculum for gifted and talented learners by adjusting the pace of instruction, the depth and breadth of content, and the complexity of intellectual processes and products.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To communicate program information effectively.</li> </ul>

## 2. Design a procedure to evaluate each goal.

For each goal of the program, school district personnel must determine how the goal can be measured. As each goal is considered, district personnel should address the following issues:

1. What questions need to be answered?
2. What data collection methods will be used for each question (e.g., interviews, surveys, observations, checklists, tests)?
3. How will school district personnel organize and analyze the data collected?
4. To whom will school district personnel report the data once collected? (Clearly identify each group or audience—e.g., school district administrators, program teachers, parents.)
5. How will data be reported to each group?

Sample B provides examples of responses to each of these issues, using the sample program goals from the table above.

As a part of this step in designing the evaluation plan, school district personnel should construct any observation forms, surveys, or other data collection instruments needed to implement the plan. The Sample Documents at the end of this chapter include several examples of data collection instruments—a classroom observation form compare this to form as revised (Sample C) and parent survey compare this one too (Sample D).

**3. Establish a timetable for implementing the evaluation design.**

School district personnel must determine how often each program goal should be evaluated in order to ensure that the program is meeting student needs in accordance with R43-220 and best practices. Some aspects of the program may need to be evaluated annually or biannually; other aspects may need to be evaluated less frequently—perhaps every three to five years. The timetable can be adjusted if an aspect of the program needs evaluating more or less frequently than originally planned. Sample E illustrates a simple timeline for implementing an evaluation plan, using the sample program goals..

**4. Implement the evaluation design.**

With an evaluation design in place, school district personnel can then begin to carry out the evaluation plan. Provisions should be made to review and adjust the evaluation design as needed.

**5. Learn from evaluation results**

As evaluation data are compiled and studied, areas that need improvement will be identified. Since the purpose of program evaluation is improving areas of weakness, school district personnel should incorporate program changes indicated by evaluation data. .



## Bibliography

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## Sample Documents

### Sample A

Program Component Checklist
An effective program has the following components:
<input type="checkbox"/> Mission Statement
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Goals and Objectives
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Design and Service Delivery Model(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Written Scope and Sequence
<input type="checkbox"/> Written Curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Assessment Procedures
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Evaluation Design
<input type="checkbox"/> Identification Procedures
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation/Placement Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Written Policy on Probation, Leave, and Withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Support Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Procedures for Record-Keeping and Reporting
<input type="checkbox"/> Program Websites, Brochures and Handbooks
<input type="checkbox"/> Rationale for Each Program Component

## Sample B

Evaluation of Sample Program Goals					
Sample Goal	Sample Questions	Data Collection Methods	Organization & Analysis of Data	Audiences	Reporting Methods
<b>Goal 1:</b> Insuring that all program components are carried out in accordance with law, regulations, & best practices.	Is the program insuring equity of access to all students?	Documentation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification</li> <li>• census testing</li> <li>• referrals</li> </ul>	List of the requirements in law, <i>R43-220</i> , & <i>Best Practices Manual</i> , with areas of compliance & deficiency noted	Program administrator  Evaluation/ Placement Team  District administrators  SDE	Written report
<b>Goal 2:</b> Providing a program design that facilitates effective delivery of services to meet student needs.	Does program model used for each grade level meet the learning needs of all identified students?	Class rosters  Progress reports  Student profiles  Current test data  Permanent records  Parent interviews  List of students no longer participating	Summary of student performance in program  Chart of student profile vs. program placement  Summary of parent survey responses  Attrition rates	Program administrator  Evaluation/ Placement Team  Guidance counselor  School & district administrators	Charts & narrative summaries
<b>Goal 3:</b> Enhancing the curriculum for gifted & talented learners.	Are students using complex intellectual processes in their classes?	Classroom observations	List of processes used in classes, with frequency observed	Program teachers  Program administrator	Conferences with teachers  Staff development session
<b>Goal 4:</b> Communicating program information effectively.	Are parents informed about the programs in which their children are participating?	Copies of communications  Sign-in sheets from parent meetings  Agendas of parent meetings  Parent survey	List of types of communications  List of topics on which parents: 1) have been informed, & 2) should have been informed, but were not  Summary of parent survey responses.	Program administrator  School & district administrators  Program teachers	Summary of findings from lists, along with analysis of parent responses

## Sample C

<b>Sample Classroom Observation Form</b>							
Observer _____ Date _____ Time _____ School _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____ Course/Subject/Unit Observed _____ Student Information: Total # _____ Observed Gender: #Boys _____ #Girls _____ Observed Ethnicity: #White _____ #AfricanAm _____ #Hispanic _____ #AsianAm _____ #Other _____ Service Delivery Model: Self-contained Resource Room/Pull-out Special class Other _____							
Description of Lesson Observed _____ _____ _____							
<b>Rating of Teacher Behaviors</b>							
<i>1 = Observed 2 = Not Observed 3 = Not Applicable      A = Highly Evident B = Evident C = Not Evident</i>							
Teacher Behavior	1	2	3	Comments	A	B	C
Use of activities/techniques that enable students to:							
♦ Evaluate situations, problems, issues							
♦ Compare and contrast ideas and issues							
♦ Generalize from concrete to abstract							
♦ Explore diverse points of view/ reframe ideas							
♦ Generate many diverse thoughts on ideas/issues							
♦ Infer from data and draw conclusions							
♦ Conduct inquiry and construct meetings							
♦ Solve complex problems							
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____ _____ _____							

NOTE: Adapted from a form developed by the Center for Gifted Education, The College of William and Mary.

## Sample D

<b>Sample Parent Survey</b>							
<p><b>Dear Parents/Guardians:</b>            We are currently assessing the effectiveness with which we communicate with parents/guardians regarding the gifted and talented program and the progress of students in the program. To assist us, please complete the following survey and return it to the school office in the envelope provided.</p>							
<p><b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that indicates how well you have been informed about each of the following:</p>							
	<b>No Information</b>		<b>Some Information</b>			<b>Well Informed</b>	
The gifted & talented curriculum	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your child's progress	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Field studies	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Weekly program assignments	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gifted & talented identification	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Needs of identified students	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent education opportunities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Procedures for re-evaluation of student placement	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p><b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that indicates how helpful you have found the following materials and opportunities:</p>							
	<b>Didn't see or attend</b>		<b>Couldn't read or understand</b>		<b>Some help</b>	<b>Clear</b>	<b>Very helpful</b>
Program newsletter	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Letters from program teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent handbook	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent orientation meeting	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Open House	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conferences with teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Please indicate below any information you would like to receive about the gifted and talented program.</p>          							

## Sample E

Sample Evaluation Timetable						
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
<b>Goal 1 (Program Components):</b> ♦ Program delivery models ♦ Identification procedures ♦ Record-keeping and reporting NOTE: This is a partial list of Program Components.		X		X		X
<b>Goal 2 (Delivery of Services):</b> ♦ Elementary level ♦ Middle school level ♦ High school level	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 3 (Curriculum Enhancement):</b> ♦ Pace of instruction ♦ Depth and breadth of content ♦ Complex processes and products	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Goal 4 (Effective Communication):</b> ♦ Communication with parents ♦ Communication with school staff	X	X	X	X	X	X